



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY, VIRGINIA

BULLETIN

Volume 47, Issue 1
January, 2018

P.O. Box 10133, Blacksburg, VA 24062-0133
<http://www.lwvmcva.org>

Meeting and Luncheon

Saturday, Feb. 10, noon

home of Carol Linker
913 Village Way North
Blacksburg

Discussion of the studies and positions adopted by the
League of Women Voters of Virginia.

Examples: Support passage in Virginia of the Equal Rights Amendment
Legislation related to women's health care

New members and potential members are especially welcome.
If you have been a member longer than two years, please bring a dish.

Contact Carol Linker, (540) 953-0533, cjlinker@gmail.com

Great Decisions Starts Jan 31

Wednesdays,
11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
German Club Manor
Course fee: \$35

More information on the LLI and
League websites:

www.cpe.vt.edu/lifelonglearning/
lwvmcva.org

Participants must join LLI (\$35) and
pay the course fee of \$35.

Register at LLI website.

See schedule at League website

This annual community discussion program on world affairs is
offered by the Virginia Tech LifeLong Learning Institute and the
League of Women Voters of Montgomery County.

The Foreign Policy Association develops background
information and policy options for eight critical issues facing
America and provides text and videos for discussion groups
across the country. Participants prepare for class by reading a
10-page overview for each topic in a Briefing Book available
at Volume II bookstore, University City Boulevard. Each group
meeting begins with a 30-minute video with information on the
issues. A local resource person who is expert on the week's topic
provides additional information and guides discussion.

Description on next pages of this Bulletin.

The League of Women Voters, a community-based organization, encourages the informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

The League of Women Voters is a non partisan political organization that does not support or endorse any political party or candidate, and any use of the League of Women Voters name in campaign advertising or literature has not been authorized by the League.

Great Decisions Topics

Jan. 31

China and America: The New Geopolitical Equation

In the last 15 years, China has implemented a wide-ranging strategy of economic outreach and expansion of all its national capacities, including military and diplomatic capacities. Where the United States has taken a step back from multilateral trade agreements and discarded the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), China has made inroads through efforts like the Belt and Road Initiative and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). This session explores the leadership and political conditions in each society that contribute to Sino-American tensions.

Resource person: Paige Tan, chair of political science department, Radford University, teaches comparative politics and international relations with a focus on Asia.

Feb. 7

Russia's Foreign Policy

Under President Vladimir Putin, Russia is projecting an autocratic model of governance abroad and working to undermine the influence of liberal democracies, namely those along Russia's historical borderlands. Russia caused an international uproar in 2016 when it interfered in the U.S. presidential contest. But Putin's foreign policy includes other instruments from alliances with autocrats to proxy wars with the U.S. in Georgia, Ukraine, and Syria. This session raises questions about Putin's conception of national interests, why Russian citizens support him, and how the U.S. should respond.

Resource person: Michael Hancock-Parmer, resides in Salem and does research on central Eurasian Studies.

Feb. 14

South Africa's Fragile Democracy

The African National Congress (ANC) party has governed South Africa since the end of apartheid in 1994. But the party today suffers from popular frustration over social corruption and economic stagnation. It faces growing threats from both left and right opposition parties even as intraparty divisions surface. Given America's history of opportunistic engagement with South Africa, there are few prospects for a closer relationship between the two countries. Meanwhile, a weaker ANC could lead to political fragmentation in this relatively new democracy.

Resource person: Josiah Tlou, professor emeritus at Virginia Tech, has done research in Malawi, Zimbabwe, Botswana, South Africa, Kenya, Zambia, and Lesotho.

Feb. 21

Media and Foreign Policy

State and non-state actors today must maneuver a complex and rapidly evolving media landscape. Conventional journalism now competes with user-generated content. Official channels of communication can be circumvented through social media. Foreign policy is tweeted from the White House and "fake news" has entered the zeitgeist. Cyberwarfare, hacking, and misinformation pose security threats. This session explores how actors use media to pursue and defend their interests in the international arena and the implications for U.S. policy.

Resource person: Eric Jardine, who is on the Virginia Tech political science faculty, focuses on war weariness and conflict outcome, cyber security, cyber terrorism, cyber protest and other media issues.

Feb. 28

The Waning of Pax Americana?

During Donald Trump's presidency, the U.S. has begun a shift away from Pax Americana, the liberal international order established in the wake of World War II. Since 1945, Pax Americana has promised peaceful

international relations and an open economy, buttressed by U.S. military power. In championing “America First” isolationism and protectionism, President Trump has shifted the political mood toward selective U.S. engagement, where foreign commitments are limited to areas of vital U.S. interest and economic nationalism is the order of the day. Geopolitical allies and challengers alike are paying close attention.

Resource person: Yannis Stivachtis, director, International Studies at Virginia Tech’s department of political science, has expertise in international relations, international organizations, European Union, Strategy and International security.

March 7

U.S. Global Engagement and the Military

The global power balance is rapidly evolving, leaving the United States at a turning point with respect to its level of engagement and the role of its military. Some argue for an “America First” paradigm, with a large military to ensure security, while others call for a more assertive posture overseas. Some advocate for a restoration of American multilateral leadership and a strengthened role for diplomacy. Still others envision a restrained U.S. role, involving a more limited military. Shaping the military function in today’s international order and balancing this with diplomatic and foreign assistance is a critical leadership challenge.

Resource person: Paul Avey, who is on the Virginia Tech political science faculty, teaches national security, strategy and world politics. His research interests include nuclear politics.

March 14

Turkey: A Partner in Crisis

Of all NATO allies, Turkey represents the most daunting challenge for the Trump administration. In the wake of a failed military coup in July 2016, the autocratic trend in Ankara took a turn for the worse. One year on, an overwhelming majority of the population considers the United States to be their country’s greatest security threat. In this age of a worsening “clash of civilizations” between Islam and the West, even more important than its place on the map is what Turkey symbolically represents as the most institutionally Westernized Muslim country in the world.

Resource person: Bill Ochsenwald, emeritus professor in the Virginia Tech Department of History, specializes in Middle Eastern history.

March 21 - no class

March 28

Global Health: Progress and Challenges

The collective action of countries, communities, and organizations over the last 30 years has literally saved millions of lives around the world. Yet terrible inequalities in health and well-being persist. The world now faces a mix of old and new health challenges, including the preventable deaths of mothers and children, continuing epidemics of infectious diseases, and rising rates of chronic disease. We also remain vulnerable to the emergence of new and deadly pandemics. The next several decades will be just as important—if not more so—than the last in determining well-being across nations.

Resource person: Rebecca Hester, on the faculty in the department of science and technology in society, has expertise in global health, Latin American migration, socio-cultural studies of health and medicine, and critical security studies.

RECOMMENDED READING

The Foreign Policy Association Great Decisions Briefing Book 2018 is available from Volume II Bookstore. And a copy is available at Blacksburg Public Library for in-library use.

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Calendar

Tuesday, Feb. 6 – 11:45 a.m., First Tuesday Luncheon, 622 North Main Restaurant
Saturday, Feb. 10 – 11 a.m., Meeting and Luncheon, home of Carol Linker
Tuesday, Feb. 13 – 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., Board meeting, Blacksburg branch, Montgomery-
Floyd Regional Library
Tuesday, March 6 – 11:45 a.m., First Tuesday Luncheon, 622 North Main Restaurant
Tuesday, June 12 – 6 a.m. – 7 p.m., Primary Election

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Julia Lewis

JOIN THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS TODAY

Become a member of the League of Women Voters. The annual membership fee is \$50. This payment includes local, state, and national membership dues. Members receive The National Voter, The Virginia Voter, and The Montgomery County Bulletin.
Email: Membership@lwvmcva.org.